

U.S. Department of the Interior

# BLM

## The Open Space Agency

### Balancing the Needs of Citizens With Conscientious Resource Stewardship

Today, public land users and the many other local Americans whose lives, families, and communities are linked to the public lands realize, as never before, that the quality of life they enjoy depends on the public lands. As the nation's largest land manager, the BLM, which manages nearly one-eighth of all land in the United States and one-fifth of the land in the Intermountain West, plays a vital role in balancing the needs of the nation with those of rural America—particularly in the fast-growing, fast-changing West.

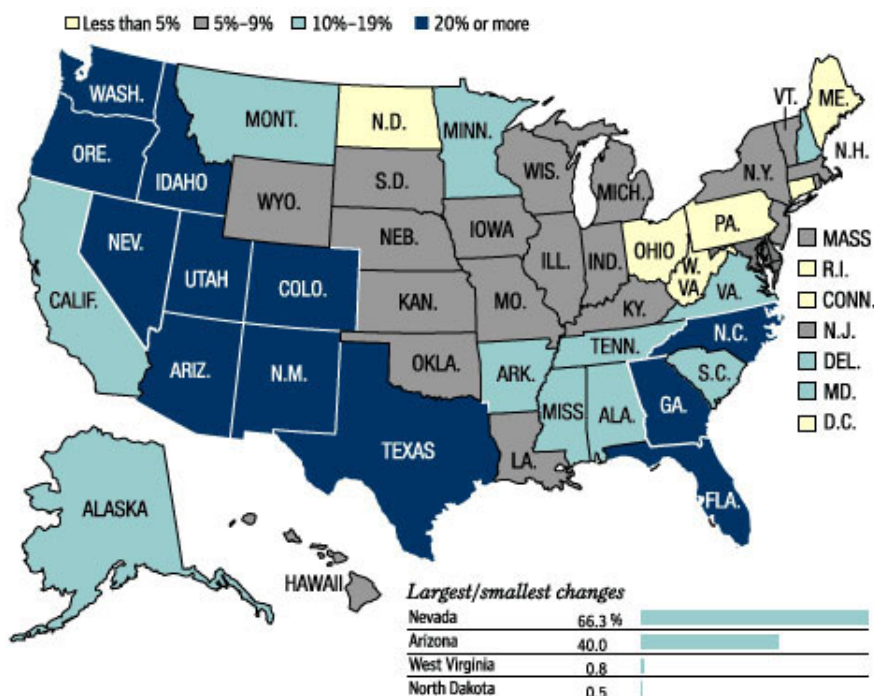
The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land—262 million surface acres—than any other Federal agency. Most of the country's BLM-managed public land is located in 12 western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the Nation. With its "multiple use" mission, the Bureau manages the public lands for such resources as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, and energy and mineral development that helps meet the nation's energy needs, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on the public lands.

Finding common ground and achieving a balance is the BLM's challenge. Oftentimes land uses and conservation are at odds, and the BLM—through consultation with local citizens, tribes, and other agencies—works to strike the best possible balance. An area of common ground certainly is open space, a definitive characteristic required for both land use and the conservation of natural resources. And demands on and for the open spaces of public lands are increasing rapidly.

The public lands, once considered remote and of little value, are now one of the last-remaining sources of prized natural resources and open space. In 1945, one year before the BLM became an agency, the West's population stood at about 17 million. Today, more than 63 million people live in the West, and the growth is expected to continue. According to the 2000 Census, the West is the fastest growing region of the Nation, which is where most BLM-managed land is located. Nine of the 12 fastest-growing States are in the West, and the rate of growth in these western states averages 27 percent—more than twice the national average (13 percent).

### Collaborating to Meet Growth Challenges

With over 22 million people now living within 25 miles of the public lands, the BLM can only be effective by working closely with local and state governments and the private sector. Through close collaboration and



*As the West grows and changes, the BLM finds itself facing new challenges. For instance, the number of threatened and endangered species found on BLM lands rose from 152 in 1990 to 306 in 2001. This need to protect many more endangered species has added to the complexity of the Bureau's land management mission.*

*"We have both the ability and the responsibility to help meet our country's energy needs in an environmentally responsible way."*

—BLM Director  
Kathleen Clarke

partnerships, the BLM determines how best to manage these lands so as to meet the needs of both Western communities and the Nation as a whole.

Under the President's proposed budget, the BLM will focus its funding in the following areas:

**Land Use Planning:** The BLM is well positioned to play a lead role in collaborative decision-making, with citizen involvement playing a central role in its land use planning. Quality land use planning allows the BLM to respond to National priorities—including our needs for reliable energy supplies, recreation, and habitat restoration—as well as to the needs and desires of local communities. These plans, which are prepared with extensive citizen participation, are intended to identify the current condition of the land, appropriate uses of its resources, and the public's needs and desires.

Currently, the BLM must significantly strengthen and update its land-use plans—the basis needed to make sound resource decisions. Most of the BLM's land-use plans were completed at least a decade ago. Due to the rapid pace of change in the West and the recent expansion of communities into rural areas, these plans need to be updated, as they no longer reflect current on-the-ground conditions or do not adequately address the public's emerging needs. To keep pace with the public's demands for a variety of uses on the public lands, the proposed FY 2003 budget would provide a \$14 million increase to update the BLM's land use plans.

**Cooperative Conservation:** In order to further stewardship of working landscapes and stimulate

innovative conservation of public lands, the BLM seeks an increase of \$10 million for the Cooperative Conservation Initiative to fund collaborative, cost-shared projects with other public and private partners for the restoration, protection, and enhancement of natural areas. These funds would be granted competitively to land-user groups, environmental organizations, landowners, communities, local and state governments, tribes, and industries for conservation projects that advance the health of the land and the well-being of people.

These additional funds would benefit resources such as threatened and endangered species, fish, wildlife, and water on BLM-administered public lands. While over the years, the BLM has been extremely successful in leveraging millions of federal dollars with non-federal funds for conservation work, the Cooperative Conservation Initiative will greatly expand the BLM's capability to enter into collaborative efforts with citizens to accomplish conservation projects that improve the health of the land *and* the well-being of people.

**Energy and Mineral Production:** One of the Nation's most pressing concerns is to reduce our reliance on foreign energy. The vast energy and mineral resources under BLM's jurisdiction gives the agency a natural and key role in implementing the President's *National Energy Policy* by ensuring that our country has an adequate supply of energy

Nation's geothermal production from BLM lands: 48%  
Nation's installed wind power capacity from BLM lands: 20%  
Nation's coal production that comes from federal lands: 35%  
Nation's gas production from federal lands: 11%  
Nation's oil production from federal lands: 5%



National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, and expanding the area offered for lease to include the northwest portion of the Reserve. If Congress passes legislation authorizing the leasing of oil and gas in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the BLM would prepare to conduct a lease sale within 22 months of the legislation's enactment.

The energy-related portion of the budget request includes an increase of \$3 million to carry-out planning requirements, and environmental and coordination work for leasing and development of Alaska's North Slope.

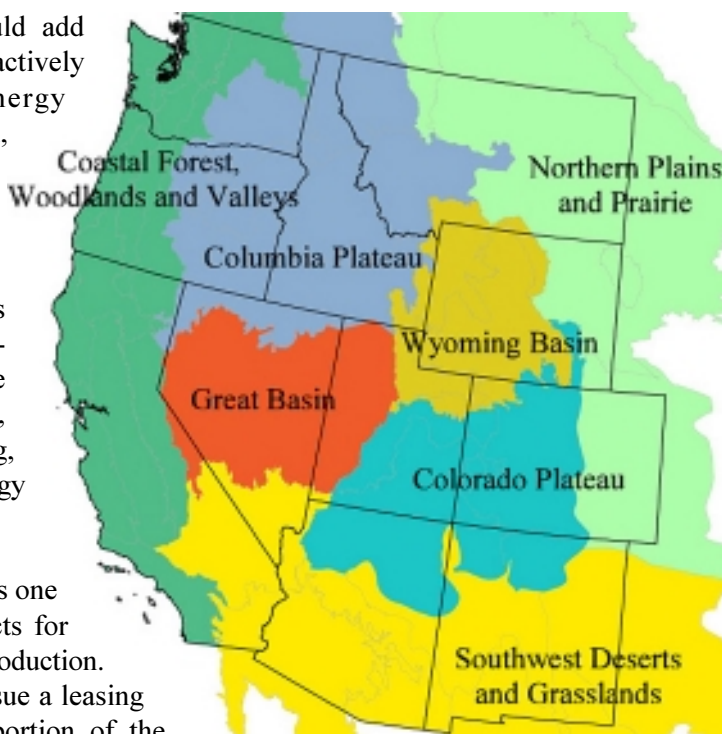
#### **Public Lands Restoration and Science:**

Some of America's most valuable public lands are at risk from past practices and current threats. There is an urgent need to restore and maintain suitable habitat on public lands for threatened and endangered species. A proposed \$1 million increase will enable the BLM to initiate cooperative habitat conservation plans for three biologically significant regions: the prairie and plains of the western plains states and the Southwest, the Wyoming Basin, and Colorado Plateau.

necessary for the safety and security of our families, our communities and our Nation.

The proposed budget would add \$10.2 million to more proactively manage renewable energy resources, oil and gas, coal, mineral materials, energy-related rights-of-way, and Indian trust responsibilities. This will allow the BLM to handle increased oil and gas leasing and permitting, step-up oil and gas compliance inspections by 25 percent, double geothermal leasing, and process 400 more energy rights-of-way.

Alaska's North Slope area is one of the BLM's best prospects for substantial new oil and gas production. The BLM continues to pursue a leasing strategy in the northeast portion of the



*While maintaining more land than any other federal land management agency (48 percent of the federal total), the BLM carries out its mission on an operating budget that amounts to funding at \$3.25 an acre. "Clearly, the BLM cannot go it alone. To be successful, we must involve the people who live on, work on, and love the land."*

—BLM Director  
Kathleen Clarke

*"The BLM is well positioned to be a leader in carrying out the Four C's—communication, cooperation, consultation, all in the service of conservation. We work with and are part of local communities. We have the tools to address competing demands in creative and constructive ways. And we work on the leading edge of innovations, such as collaborative, community-based planning."*

—BLM Director  
Kathleen Clarke



*“Good stewardship of the environment is not just a personal responsibility, it is a public value. ... Our duty is to use the land well, and sometimes not to use it at all. This is our responsibility as citizens, but more than that, it is our calling as stewards of the earth.”*

— President  
George W. Bush

The conservation plans will be aimed at assessment and recovery of threatened and endangered species and their habitats. With another \$1 million increase, the BLM would expand and improve the use of science to guide resource management decisions and improve access to the BLM’s natural resource information among federal, state, and other public and private individuals and groups.

**National Landscape Conservation System:** The public lands present spectacular landscapes, many of which have been congressionally or administratively designated as special areas. These areas are managed almost exclusively for conservation purposes. These areas include National Conservation Areas, National Monuments, Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas,

Wild and Scenic Rivers and National Scenic and Historic Trails. The proposed increase of \$2 million would bolster the BLM’s ability to collaborate with local citizens and officials to improve environmental education, public safety, and protect critical cultural resources.

**Wildland Fire Management:** With continued robust funding of \$675.5 million, the Department will continue full implementation of the national fire plan by ensuring firefighting resources are adequate, continuing aggressive reduction of hazardous fuels to reduce fire risks to communities in the wildland-urban interface, and maintaining support for rural community fire districts.

**Management Excellence:** In the coming year, the BLM will carry out the Secretary’s management strategy, implementing the President’s five government-wide initiatives for strategic management of human capital, competitive sourcing, improved financial performance, expanded electronic government, and budget and performance integration. The BLM will also continue to stress management reforms such as expanding the “Service First” initiative, working with the Forest Service to provide efficient interagency cooperation in public lands management.

